ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN
FORUM OECUMENIQUE DE FEMMES CHRETIENNES D'EUROPE
ÖKUMENISCHES FORUM CHRISTLICHER FRAUEN IN EUROPA

EFECW News

June 2018

VIII GENERAL ASSEMBLY, LOCCUM 2010

IX GENERAL ASSEMBLY, TINOS 2014

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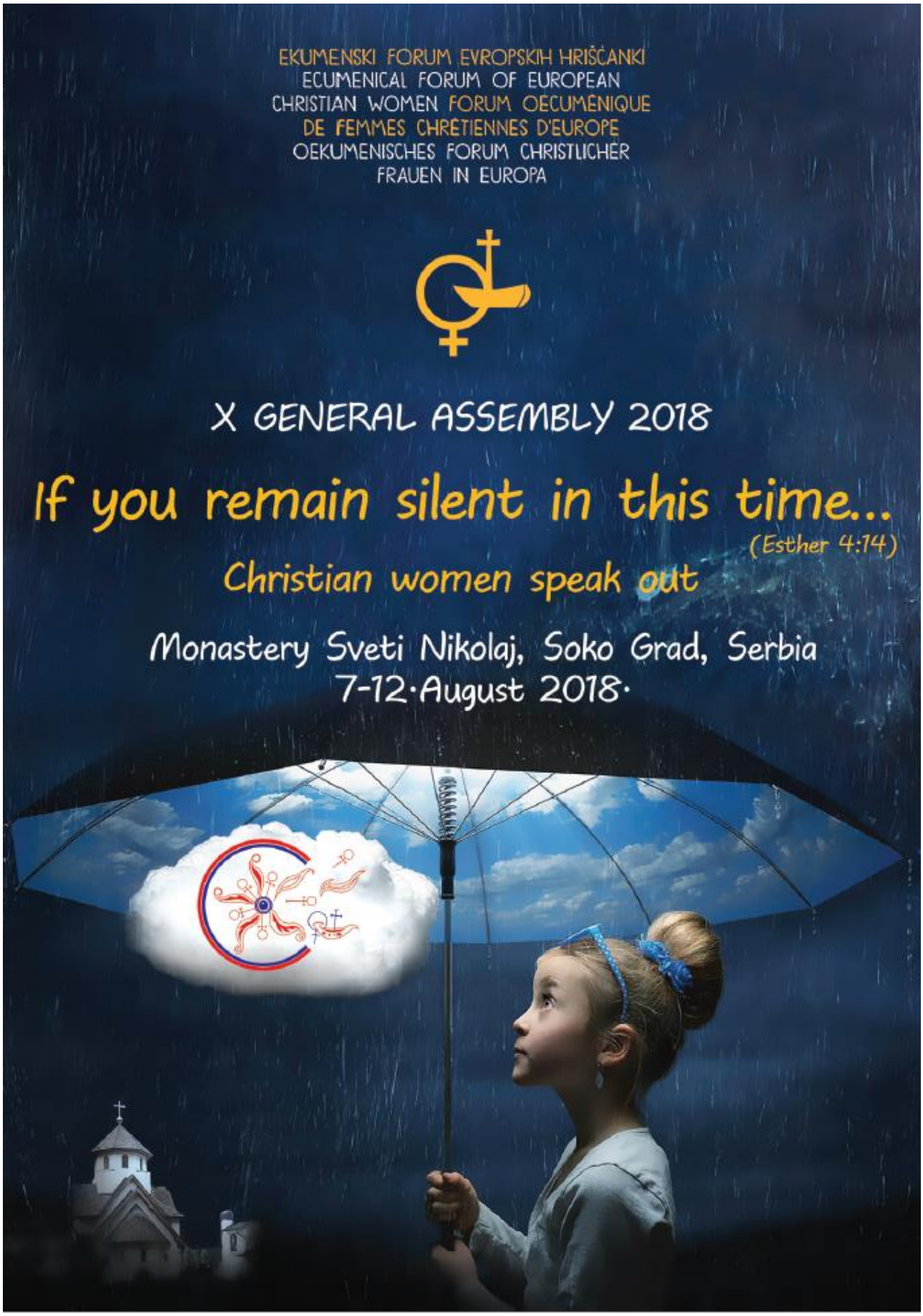
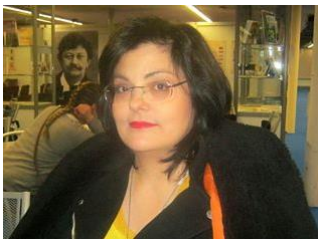

EKUMENSKI FORUM EVROPSKIH HRIŠĆANKI
ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN
CHRISTIAN WOMEN FORUM OECUMÉNIQUE
DE FEMMES CHRÉTIENNES D'EUROPE
OEKUMENISCHES FORUM CHRISTLICHER
FRAUEN IN EUROPA
X GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018
If you remain silent in this time...
(Esther 4:14)
Christian women speak out
Monastery Sveti Nikolaj, Soko Grad, Serbia
7-12·August 2018·

If you remain silent in this time… (Esther 4:14) Christian women speak out



Ivana Kronja, Ph.D. in filmology, was born in Belgrade in 1970. Dr. Kronja is a film scholar, film critic, and theorist of culture and the media, including film and media representations of women. She is a member of the Serbian National Academy for Film Art and Science (AFUN) and professor at Fine and Applied Arts School – Applied Sciences University, in Belgrade. She is the keynote speaker on Thursday 9th August 2018.

Media culture, women and society: A view from the semi-periphery of Europe

Recent tendencies in global media culture have been an active part in the overall transformation of the understanding of social and cultural values and of common public decency. The capitalist culture of consumerism has become a widespread culture of the hyper-production of media images, distributed within the so-called ''Society of Multiple Screens''. The impact of new technologies of communication to social behavior and general ethical principles had been immense, positioning media and a citizen-consumer as an overall authority, that stands above all of the traditional authorities and values.

This postmodern media screen culture had been, however, only a surface and a symbolic ground that reflect deeper changes and contradictions in European and world society, that experiences one of the deepest crises in our recent history. It is first of all a structural, ethical and spiritual crisis, that faces lack of humanism and social justice, precarious employment, modern slavery and human trafficking, class and gender discrimination, chauvinism and sensationalism. It is also characterized by the introduction of an unprecedented public vulgarity, political incorrectness, legal corruption, and an intolerable promotion of force and violence in both real politics and media fiction.

This is particularly reflected in the unstable social and working position of women, followed by media images based on both limitation of women's equality and seeing of female as a vulgar spectacle. The role of women is most often seen in terms of limiting and negative stereotypes, without affirmative representations of women with outstanding or just normal human, professional and spiritual qualities. However, many of us fight such simplified representations, acting actively, in spite of difficulties, in our public and social space. Christian values of justice, love, mercy and ethics are severely challenged in this overall picture of the neoliberal paradigm and growing intolerance and militarization of everyday culture.

The impact of consumerist capitalist media worldview has severely hit the post-Socialist countries, such as the states who are the successors of former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, coming together with the new class order with rich minorities and an immense mass-poverty, unimaginable in previous times of Socialism. The dominant culture in these societies is a secular postmodern culture, but its rhetoric of civil rights, such as the rights of women, seem to keep a decorative function in the society, where poverty, family and criminal violence is deeply gendered. Media images of women in post Socialist societies, and in Serbia in particular, is significantly marked with the neoliberal worldview and its understanding of women as the main exponent of the society of spectacle and of the new global political order.

The lecture will also discuss some examples in the field of cinema and media, including the Oscar-winning films, that relate to a current debate about the ''two fundamentalisms'', or radicalization of ideological and practical positions in gender politics and in religion, in terms of their impact on women and society, both at the semi-periphery of Europe and in the world.

Svenka Savić, Professor Emeritus and coordinator for the Gender Studies Center at the University of Novi Sad, has published three books with topics on gender and religion: *Feminist Theology* (1999), *Gender Perspective in Inter-Religious Dialogue in the XXI Century* (2009) (co-authored with Rebeka Jadranka Anić), and *Women Pastors' Contribution to Peacebuilding in Protestant Churches in Vojvodina (2017).* She has also written a series of articles on the topic of women in religions during the period from 1997-2009, with a focus on inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue, among others **"**An Analysis of the Religious Education Textbooks in Serbia". She has organized numerous panels, workshops, courses dedicated to gender, religion, reconciliations. Prof. Savić will be one of the keynote speakers on 8th August 2018.

Us and the "Others" in today's context in Serbia

Who are the people today who need our words, actions and good will? Much more than before, those are the people who are on their journey through Serbia en route to other parts of Europe, but their fate brought them to us and this territory. Women and children, for the most part young people, who fled their countries in search of new home –refugees and displaced people– are part of our concern in today's context.

However, equally important for us are those groups of citizens who don't feel protected enough in their human rights – women of different age groups: elderly and sick, as well as children. By the same token, individuals within Christian communities in Serbia don't feel protected enough within their communities (Savic, 2017). What the religious education doesn't provide in schools today are the ways we care about others from other religious communities, not ours (Savic, 2018). Nor are there any legal solutions or practice (for example Istanbul convention in the region and in Serbia).

In my approach I would like to link foundational Christian values with what is in essence an ideology about human rights and in feminist theories, to show that in today's context we face many challenges where we could prove our capabilities to care for all women who are deprived of their own human rights, women's rights and others (women victims of domestic violence during wars in Yugoslav regions at the end of nineties, but also those women who showed their extraordinary capabilities, primarily handicapped women, women in Roma communities, and others). I use empirical data from existing projects, or recently completed ones, in order to show the power/incapability of care for those who need it here today and I would like to make a proposal how to jointly become active in today's circumstances.

References:

Savić, Svenka (2017), Women Pastors' Contribution to Peacebuilding in Protestant Churches in Vojvodina, Women studies and Research, Novi Sad.

Savić, Svenka (2018), An Analysis of the Religious Education Textbooks in Serbia, Gorana Ognjenović and Jasna Jozetić, eds., Education in Post-conflict Transition, Palgrave Studies in Religion, Politics, and Policy, Cham (Switzerland), 251-273.

Kathy Galloway is one of the keynote speakers on 8th August 2018. She comes from Edinburgh, Scotland, trained in divinity and pastoral studies at the University of Glasgow, and was ordained as a minister of the Church of Scotland in 1977. After a period of ministry in an urban parish in Edinburgh, (living in a basic Christian community) she has always worked ecumenically. Previous posts include work for international development and Scottish anti-poverty agencies, for the Scottish Constitutional Convention, as Peace and Justice Co-ordinator for the Scottish Churches Council, and for the Presbyterian Church of Mauritius. She was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Foundation to develop workshops on spiritual values in culture and development. The major focus of her work has always been with people living in poverty, with women, and with the use of creative arts.

In November 2009, Kathy moved to Christian Aid to the role of Head of Team leading the work of Christian Aid in Scotland.

Previous to that, in 2002, she was elected as Leader of the Iona Community. She has been a member of the Iona Community since 1976, was Co-Warden of Iona Abbey from 1983-89, and was the editor of its magazine, 'Coracle', from 1989-2001. She has edited a number of books of liturgy and theology for the Community. Previous to that, she was employed by Church Action on Poverty as its Scottish Link-worker, with a special remit to develop participatory approaches to poverty with those who experience it.

As a practical theologian in the community, she has worked for Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Society of Friends and Roman Catholic local churches and groups and national organisations. She has travelled widely, and acted as a liturgical and theological resource person and consultant for the World Council of Churches, Conference of European Churches, European Industrial Mission, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World YMCA, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Irish School of Ecumenics, the Kirchentag, the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, and Action of Churches Together in Scotland. She wrote the Lent Study Guide for 1997 for the Scottish churches, was a consultant to the 1998 Lambeth Conference and a co-opted staff member for the VIIIth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998. In 2005, she was one of 1000 women worldwide collectively nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

She has also worked extensively for non-church bodies, including BBC Television (presenting 12 network programmes on Celtic Christianity) and radio, and the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Lancaster, Bradford and Cambridge, in local community development, and for many community and women's groups. She is a patron of the Student Christian Movement (SCM), the European Women's Synod, and the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre.

She has been a guest preacher throughout Britain, gave the 1996 Essex Hall Lecture, on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, the keynote address at the 1998 Conference of the British and Irish Association for Practical Theology, the 2000 Mair Lectures on Preaching at Glasgow University and the 2003 John Wheatley Lecture for the Christian Socialist Movement.

She is she author of nine books on theology and spirituality. Her liturgical writing has been widely anthologised. She has also published four collections of poetry. She lives in inner-city Glasgow, has three adult children, and a large extended family with whom she keeps in close touch. She is passionate about people, poetry and justice, and the recreational pleasures of music, gardening, food and friends.

She is also a singer, and has sung traditional and contemporary Scottish folksongs all over the world. She has travelled widely to most of Western Europe, Russia, Poland, Bosnia, the Middle East, North, West and Southern Africa, Latin America, Cambodia, Japan and Taiwan, Canada and the United States. She spent six weeks travelling in the USA in 2001 as an International Peacemaker with the Presbyterian Church, USA.

Edita Jankov, **A Jewish perspective on the Book of Esther**

Esther's Scroll as a separate book in the Old Testament is a story abundant in action, personae and meaning. It takes place in Persia, around 500 BCE. The heroine is Esther, or Hadassah, an exceptionally beautiful young girl, who belongs to the Jewish Diaspora. She was chosen as the new queen consort to king Xerxes (Ahasuerus). Her uncle Mordechai is a high rank clerk in the court, who also plays an active role in the story, along with the negative figure Haman. A plot in the court launches a series of events that results in a decision bad for the Jews. The bad counselor Haman decides to engineer a plot to murder all the Jews in the Persian Empire. That is when Esther decides to take action in order to save her nation, although she had been hiding her identity up until that moment. Most of the events and people's behavior reflect the spirit of those ancient times, but rationality, loyalty to one's nation, a desire for freedom, the gap between appearance and reality as well as the importance of action shine through centuries, sending an eternal message. There are over forty names mentioned in the story, among them just three women, who are strong, influential female figures.

In Jewish tradition, the holiday of Purim is observed in memory of the victory depicted in the Book of Esther. The book explains that the reason "Purim" has its name is because the word "Pur" means "the lot" (like in gambling), since Haman cast lots to determine the day he would destroy the Jews.

It is a day of rejoicing, when Jews should give food gifts to one another and give presents to the poor, feasting and making merry. It falls mainly in March (the month of Adar), celebrated with music, fancy dress parties and poppy seed cakes.

Photo credit: https://info.goisrael.com/en/purim-286971

Praying with our feet: Advocacy in fellowship

As I stood in front of 120+ women –and some male– delegates from all regions of the world to lead an orientation during this past year's 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), I wore a t-shirt under my suit jacket that read: "The rise of the woman equals the rise of the nation." It was my silent, yet insistent, prayer and act of advocacy – my manifested hope that as we rise together in worship, song, and praise during our orientation that we also rise together bold, empowered, and protective of our dignity in the forum at the United Nations for the next two weeks.

As the co-chair of Ecumenical Women at the United Nations and the Advocacy Officer for the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the Ecumenical United Nations Office in New York, I have been blessed to bear witness to the power of ecumenical (and interfaith and no faith) women from all over the world who come together in unity. We may not agree on every issue, and we hold different priorities dependent on our context, our age, our identities, our regions, and more. However, standing with thousands of women and male allies from all over the world during the last two years of the CSW, I have come to know that we are rooted in a firm belief that women reflect the sacred, and we need this to be honored in the structures, systems, and ways of being in our world today.

In a recent Pilgrim Team Visit to Juba South Sudan focused on African Women and Faith, organized by the WCC in early May 2018, we listened to the pains and wounds of the country, which are born most heavily by the women. We heard stories of rape, rampant insecurity, assault, and emotional and psychological abuse. Needless to say, we also heard their cries of deep spiritual fatigue amidst such strong faith, one woman saying "the women of South Sudan carry a lot, and we are tired."

We also heard incredible stories of resiliency, power, and faith. For example, since January of 2014, women have been organizing themselves on a monthly basis to walk from church to church, praying with their feet, collecting hundreds and hundreds of women, children, orphans and some men along the way to their final destination – a powerful symbol of hope in the face of fear.

In my role as Advocacy Officer, it is also my responsibility to translate such experiences of witness and sharing into advocacy strategy at the United Nations. At times, many wonder what, for example, can a multi-lateral, complex, state-led institution like the UN do for women suffering and displaced in South Sudan? What we must realize is that our global advocacy is empty and void of meaning without the stories like those we heard in Juba. The global norms and internationally binding (and non-binding) resolutions for which we strategize at the UN are only relevant if we lift up the stories of struggle and action for transformative change of our member churches. These stories are all chapters of the novel we try to weave in global advocacy work, in the hopes that they also strengthen regional, national, and local advocacy.

Within the WCC this year, we are re-launching the Thursdays in Black campaign, a campaign for a world without rape and gender-based violence that grew out of the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998). As we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the WCC and the 20th anniversary of the Decade this year, it's an opportunity for us to mark our achievements and prayerfully admit our shortcomings, especially for women.

And yet, we continue praying with our feet, advocating on behalf of the concerns of our churches and their contributions to society. In fellowship, collaboration, and relationship with one another, our advocacy becomes stronger, so that we may truly rise together.

Jillian Abballe

WORKSHOPS, 8th August 2018

Workshop Leader	Title
Carin Gardbring	***Women count in peace building***
Sr. Dr. Giovanna Maria Muha CJ	***In times of crisis, forsaking silence in service of the Word***
Anthea Sully	***We cannot be silent - meeting the challenges of leading in our churches.***
Nataliya Horbal, Ulyana Kuzymchak	***Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment***
Eveline Zinsstag	***Self-assertion and self-care in a male dominated work environment. Exploring strategic behaviours with Esther and Washti***
Maria Lyraki	***Creating new Forum (EFECW) Groups***
Haydy Nelson	***Megilla Esther in Judaistic and Christian tradition in the Netherlands***
The Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC) Martina Heinrichs, Liza Lamis	***Participating in God's Mission with what you have, right where you are – and as a prayer.***
Katerina Pekridou (CEC)	**Ecumenical dialogue in Europe today**
Mima Ruzicic Novkovic	***Disability in the planetarian age*** *(see trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXqXieHAE2Q)*

Excursions during the General Assembly

Krupanj & Dobri Potok

Dobri Potok is a valley in Radjevina region, interesting for its old wooden church dedicated to the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God. It is one of the oldest churches in the area. Although it was damaged several times during the past centuries, it has kept its original appearance. Near the church there's an old graveyard with some unusual tombstones, and a small ethno-museum complex, with a few wooden houses built in traditional style.

The complex houses an ethnographic museum and a natural history museum, with rich collection of items related to the history of the region. Krupanj was an important town in the medieval Serbian Kingdom, being at the centre of important historical happenings. Most of the tombstones, scattered all over the Krupanj area, date from this period. People from the state of Dubrovnik, attracted by the rich ore deposits, settled in the area which became an important trade center. They even built a Catholic church there, which sadly doesn't exist anymore.

Nearby you'll find a drinking-water fountain "Braca Jugovic", famous since the 19th century, and plenty of commemoration plaques dedicated to, for example, harambasa Djordje Obradovic Curcija, the leader of Radjevina people in the 1804 uprising against the Turks; Duke Krsta Ignjatovic, who defended Krupanj from the Turks from 1804 to 1812; Captain Petar Radojlovic who ousted Turks and demolished Soko-grad in 1862 etc.

(SOURCE: travelclub.org)

Drinski Raj

As the name says is sort of paradise at river Drina. Peaceful place for quiet time, meditation and possibility to experience the Drina river in safe boats. It is a place for enjoying power of the nature.

There is also possibility to visit some corridors under the river…. …And Church in the cave.

Source: facebook.com/drinskiraj

Old spa Banja Koviljača – monastery Tronoša

There are no proper historical records which confirm the origin of the monastery and everything known about it is according to the various traditional writings. The monastery was an endowment of King Stefan Dragutin, however, he died in 1316 and the construction was finished by his widow, Queen Catherine in 1317. It was named after three rivers which confluence into one at the monastery (*tri reke koje vodu nose*, "three water bearing rivers"). The original edifice was looted and razed by the Ottomans several times in the 14th and 15th centuries. It ended up being completely demolished and it is not known what the original monastery looked like.

One of the best known traditions in the monastery is the making of large "plowmen candles". Two are cast each year out of 50 kg (110 lb) of wax and are 1.5 m (4 ft 11 in) tall. On the Maundy Thursday people gather in front of the monastery, bring the candles inside the church and light them in front of the icons of Jesus Christ and the Holy Mother of God. They are thought to help to preserve and enhance the harvest, hence the name. The custom of casting the candles and the ceremony of bringing them into the church and lighting them has been placed on the Serbian list of the intangible cultural heritage.

As Vuk Stefanović Karadžić learned to write in the monastery, "coming to school from the nearby Tršić through the forest", a section of the monastery is adapted into the "Museum of the Vuk's early schooling". Today, Tronoša is a female monastery. In 2017 it officially celebrated 700th anniversary.

Spa Banja Koviljača is in the neighborhood of the monastery. It is old royal spa. ***(Source: Wikipedia)***

REMINDER: Nominations

One of the most important tasks at our General Assembly will be to elect the new leadership, namely the Co-Presidents (CoPs) and the Co-ordinating Committee (CC). They will serve EFECW for the next four (4) years. By this we form the conditions which make it possible to follow our vocation to empower women in Europe. When you hold meetings in your countries to consider which women are willing to be candidates please look also for newcomers and young women who can contribute in their fresh ways and are eager to take responsibilities. It is vital that we get nominations from all regions of Europe and from all denominations. Details can be found in our written constitution (article 10, paragraph 3) which you find on our website www.efecw.net under „About“. You need to get the agreement of any candidate you want to nominate. Please note that the candidates will have to decide which position they want to stand for, as they cannot jump from one position (Co-President) to another (Co-ordinating Committee) or vice versa once the list has been closed (24 hours before the elections start). Forms to be found at http://www.efecw.net/news.html.

EFECW Coordinating Committee spring meeting

15th – 18th March 2018, Zemun and Soko Grad, Serbia

We were coming together: the three Co-presidents and the members of CC, but we missed Zsuzsi because of pregnancy and Asea because of illness, but we others struggled right to find solution for all open questions for the GA.

All together we went by bus to the monastery to see the place live and it was great: the surrounding with mountains, outdoor space, the river Drina, a small lake, the venue with the sleeping rooms, dining room, the rooms for workshops and so on. So planning could go on! And we discussed and decided how many workshops we would need with which themes, where shall we meet for service and prayer and so on. Jo Love from Scotland was with us; she will be the person to lead us through the "spiritual journey" during the General Assembly.

We met the local women: some from the Novi Sad group, some from the Belgrade group, and by surprise we were guests at the yearly meeting of the cultural associations who preserve and transmit to the next generation Serbian traditions and culture: beautiful handicrafts, nice embroidery, music, folk dancing, etc.

So at the end of our meeting we were content and in our baggage there is a lot of work till August!

Marianne Milde CJ

News from the members

ThMgr. Anna Adamovičová

With sadness in heart but also firmly hoping and looking forward to the day of resurrection we are sharing with you that pastor Anna Adamovicova from the Slovak Ecumenical Forum, whom many of you have known, entered the eternal glory on Wednesday 28 March 2018. The funeral took place on Saturday 31 March 2018 in the Lutheran Church in Modra, Slovakia.

May she rest in peace and raise in glory in the heavenly dwelling.

In Risen Christ, the women of the Slovak Ecumenical Forum

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The Fellowship of the Least Coin (http://www.flc.net.ph)
and the **Ruth-Epting Fund** (www.efecw.net)

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